Christmas at Punkin Holler

by Elizabeth F. Guptill

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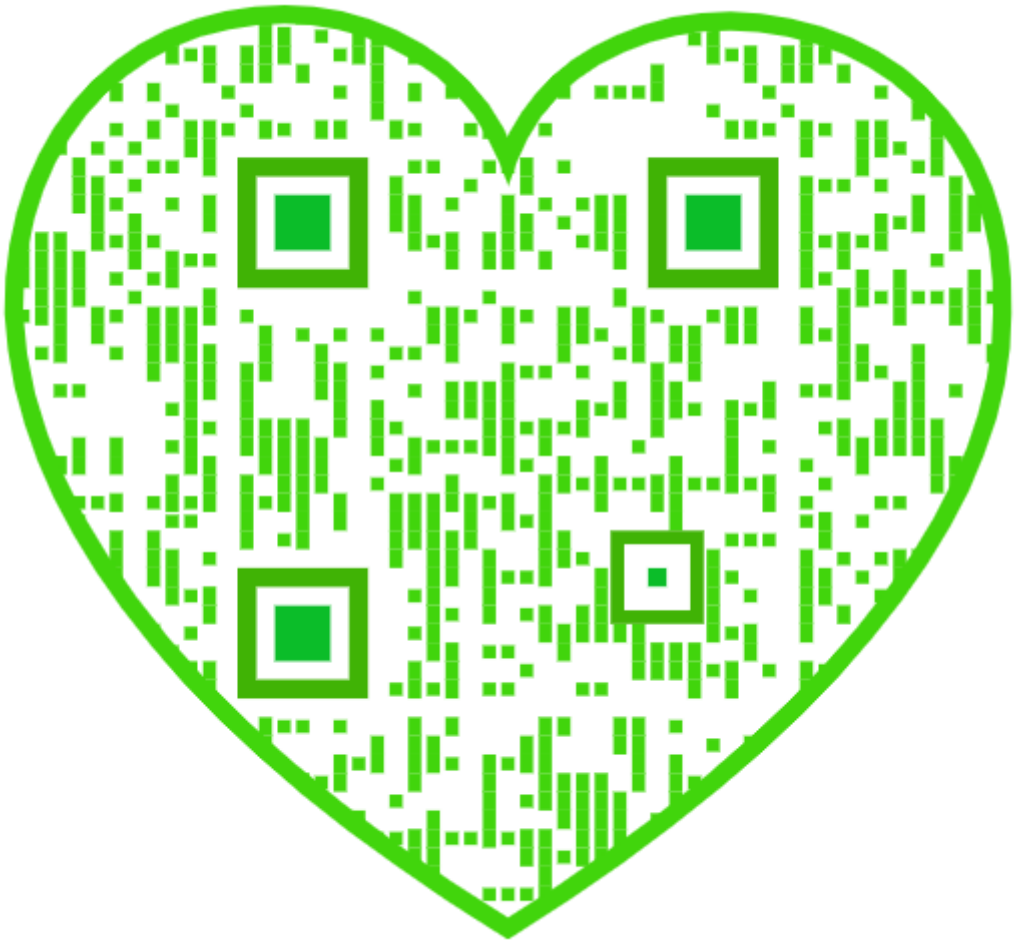

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A CHRISTMAS PLAY

BY

ELIZABETH F. GUPTILL

Author of "Christmas at McCarthy's,"
"A Topsy Turvy Christmas," Etc.

PAINE PUBLISHING COMPANY
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Cast of Characters

Miss Peppergrass	The Teacher.
Aunt Hepsey	A queer character of the district.
Hiram, Jacob, Lucindy, Johnny, Sammy, Patty, Betsey, Peter, Reuben, Aaron, Mosetta, Miriam, Faith, Sally, Patience	Pupils.

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Christmas at Punkin Holler

SCENE: The schoolroom. The necessary articles of furniture are the teacher's desk and chair, and a couple of long wooden benches, or settees, if the benches are not to be easily obtained. The pupils are moving around, talking, laughing, and romping; making considerable noise and confusion. Miss Peppergrass enters, in hood and shawl, and speaks, but fails to make herself heard. She removes her wraps, hanging them on a nail near her desk, and rings bell smartly. School slowly becomes quiet, but the pupils do not seat themselves. Instead, they stare, wonderingly, at teacher.

MISS P.—Take your seats.

HIRAM—Don't hafter. It's a hollerday.

MISS P.—I should say as much, judging by the noise you were making; but we can not rehearse for the entertainment to-night in the midst of such a racket as that. It sounded like a den of wild beasts.

JACOB—So 'twas, Teacher—a regular circus. I'm a lion, and I'm a-goin' to eat Sally up! (*Pounces on Sally, and begins to growl, and to pretend to eat her. Sally screams.*)

MISS P.—(*ringing bell again*) That will do, Jacob. Now, children, take your seats. We must have it quiet. (*Children crowd into seats. Johnny tries to pass the end of one seat, but is held back by Lucindy. He struggles.*)

MISS P.—What's the trouble there, Lucindy?

LUCINDY—Johnny won't set down.

JOHNNY—No such a thing, Teacher. I was a-goin' ter set down, and she grabbed onto me.

LUCINDY—He wasn't! He was a-goin' right by.

JOHNNY—Well, I was a-goin' to set down in my own seat. I don't like to set there.

MISS P.—But we are reserving the seats for the visitors. There will be a great many here to-night, you know. Don't you want to be a little gentleman, and give up your seat to some one—your mamma, perhaps?

JOHNNY—Huh! Ma couldn't git herself into *that* seat. She's too fat. Pa's a-goin' to bring a chair for her, 'cause she couldn't git into *any* seat, 'thout you tooked away the desk first!

MISS P.—Well, some one may want it.

JOHNNY—They do. I want it.

MISS P.—(*sharply*) Well, you can't have it! Now sit down at once in the place assigned you, or—(*she takes a switch from her desk.*)

JOHNNY—(*seating himself*) You don't give up your seat.

MISS P.—Ah, but I shall to-night, Johnny. I shall give it, as the seat of honor, to our supervisor, Mr. Barker. I shall be glad to give it to him, Johnny.

JAKE—(*aside*) Sure she will. She's settin' her cap for him.

MISS P.—(*sharply*) What's that, Jacob?

JAKE—I wish you wouldn't call me Jay *Cup*. Nobody else ever did. I'd as lief be called Jay Saucer, any day.

MISS P.—We won't argue the matter, Jacob. I asked you what you said to Johnny.

JAKE—I was jest a tellin' him thet you was more politer than him, that's all.

MISS P.—Indeed! We will rehearse now, for this evening.

SAMMY—Be n't we a goin' ter trim that ere tree?

PATTY—We brung a heap o' popcorn, Teacher, all strung.

BETSEY—And we've made paper chains, 'n tied up a lot o' but'nuts in colored paper.

PETER—'N ma's made doughnuts 'n tied 'em up in blue ribbing.

SAMMY—Please can't we trim it fust?

MISS P.—No indeed, you must all rehease your parts first.

JACOB—Can't we lug it in?

SALLY—Then we could look at it while we was 'hearsin'.

MISS P.—It might take your attention. No, let it remain where it is for the present.

JOHNNY—It wants ter be brung in here fer the presents. 'Sides, there ain't no presents ben brung yit.

MISS P.—It must remain outside until after the rehearsal.

SAMMY—Somebody may steal it.

MISS P.—I hardly think so, with woods all around us. A tree would hardly be worth stealing, Sammy. Silence now.

SAMMY—(*aside*) Somebody may steal it, all the same.

HIRAM—Kin we rehearse in custum?

MISS P.—In what, Hiram?

HIRAM—In custom. In our other rigs—our fol-de-rols 'n doodads that we're go'n ter wear tonight?

MISS P.—Oh, your costumes? Certainly, if you have brought them. (*Those who are to change clothing, rush out, pellmell.*)

REUBEN—Cuss is a bad swear word, Teacher. Ma licked me when I said it.

MISS P.—I should suppose she would. Little boys mustn't say naughty words.

REUBEN—But you said it.

MISS P.—I? On no, Reuben, I wouldn't say a naughty word.

REUBEN—But you did say it, jest the same. You told 'em ter put on their cuss tunes, 'n ef it's bad ter call er cow a cuss, it's bad ter call a tune one.

MISS P.—Their costumes, Reuben. Their other clothes.

REUBEN—Oh! (*aside, as Aunt Hepsey enters*) But she did say it, 'n she said it agin.

AUNT HEPSEY—How de do, Miss Peppergrass! I thought I'd jest drap in to hear the perliminaries, bein's I couldn't git out to-night.

MISS P.—(*offering chair*) You are very welcome, Miss Bascom. But do come to-night.

AUNT HEPSEY—(*sitting down heavily*) Suz me, child, I dassn't! I kaint posserbly go out arter dark, count 'o my rheumatiz. Cripples me all up. I'll enjy it jest as well now, though, so jest go right ahead, same's ef I warn't here.

SAMMY—Was that ere tree all right when you come in, Aunt Hepsy?

AUNT HEPSY—Land, yes, Sammy. Why shouldn't it be?

LUCINDY—Sammy's afraid a bear'll come along 'n eat it.

SAMMY—Haint neither, but I'm worried 'bout that ere tree. Somebody might steal it.

(*Re-enter Hiram. He has pulled on the Santa Claus trousers over his overalls, and stuffed a pillow in front. He is endeavoring to place one behind.*)

REUBEN—That's a cuss tune all right.

MISS P.—Reuben!

REUBEN—Well, you say it.

MISS P.—I certainly did not. Say costume, Reuben.

REUBEN—You don't like it when I say it.

MISS P.—You haven't said it yet. Say it.

REUBEN—(*sulkily*) Cuss tune.

MISS P.—No, not cuss, cos. Cos-tume. Say it correctly or I shall punish you.

REUBEN—Cuss, cuss tune.

MISS P.—(*shaking him*) Cos! Say cos.

REUBEN—(*whimpering*) Cu—cuss—cos!

MISS P.—(*shaking again*) Tume.

REUBEN—(*whimpering louder*) Tune.

MISS P.—No, tume. Now say costume.

REUBEN—Coss—tume! Boo, hoo, hoo!

MISS P.—Now sit down and behave yourself. (*Reuben sits down, and sulks.*) (*Hiram has been industriously stuffing in the back pillow, but the front one has fallen on the floor.*)

HIRAM—I kaint git on these ere britches ter save my gizzard.

AUNT HEPSY—Well, I sh'd think you might, Hi, I sure do. They're big enough for old Paul Clear, let alone Hi Whittaker.

HIRAM—Big enough! Guess they be, Aunt Hepsy, but fast ez I git the front piller in, aout it draps while I'm a gittin' in the one behint.

MISS P.—Let me help you.

HIRAM—Guess I'll hafter, Teacher, sure. Nice big baby I be, kain't dress myself.

MISS P.—Bring in the tunic, and then we'll see.

HIRAM—The two whats?

MISS P.—The tunic. The blouse. The rest of the suit.

HIRAM—Oh, the jacket? But there ain't but one, less 'n you count the belt.

MISS P.—Bring the whole of it here.

HIRAM—And the mask? 'N the cap 'n whiskers.

MISS P.—Yes, the whole of it, and hurry.

AUNT HEPSEY—Jest you come here, Hi. I'll fix you up. Go right on 'ith your programmy, Miss Peppergrass. I'll tend ter him. I've rigged many a Santy Claws in my day.

(*She assists Hiram, while the rehearsal goes on.*)

MISS P.—Now, children, we must get to work, or we will not be through by the time they want to trim the tree.

SAMMY—Somebody'll steal it afore then. Better bring it in, Teacher.

MISS P.—The tree is all right, Sammy. Now I have the programme all arranged, and we will proceed just as we shall to-night. First will be the welcome song.

RHODA—Ma says Ruby oughter say his welcome piece fust.

MISS P.—Oh no. We will sing first, then Reuben will speak his piece.

REUBEN—(*starting up*) I'm a goin' ter speak first. Ma said so.

MISS P.—Sit down, Reuben, till I call your name.

REUBEN—(*still standing*) Call it first, then. Ma says I gotter say it first.

AUNT HEPSY—Reckon he'll hafter, ef his ma says so.

MISS P.—I'm running this school.

AUNT HEPSY—Mebbe so, mebbe so; but you don't know Hanner Ann Jenkins 's well 's I do, or you'd know thet ef she'd made up her mind thet Ruby sh'd speak first, she'll have him do it, ef it

breaks up the whole entertainment. Hev'n't you ever noticed thet Ruby was kinder sot in his ways for a youngster? He takes it from his ma, she thet was Hanner Ann Bean. I'd let him say it fust, ef I was you, I really would.

MISS P.—But I have my programme all arranged.

AUNT HEPSEY—Change it, child. Ef 'twas jest Ruby, you could lick him inter mindin', but Hanner Ann is six feet high, 'n weighs over two hundred. Do let's have peace at Christmas time. 'N 'twill be anythin' but peace ef Ruby don't say that ere leetle varse fust. Go ahead 'n git it over, Ruby.

(*Reuben comes out, and speaks.*)

Welcome,[1] Mr. Supervisor, welcome,[2] friends and pairients dear.
On thet[3] tree I think you'll find a gift for everybody[4] here.
Hope[5] I get a jumpin' jack, and a bag of candy sweet.[6]
'N now I've said my little piece, I'll make my bow,[7] and take my seat.[8]

(*At* 1, *he bows elaborately to Aunt Hepsy, in the teacher's chair. At* 2, *he bows to school. At* 3, *he points to side of room.. At* 4, *he opens his arms, flinging his hands widely apart. At* 5, *he clasps his hands, with a loud clap, gazing upward. At* 6, *he smacks his lips. At* 7, *he bows again. At* 8, *he runs to seat.*)

RHODY—He didn't say it right, teacher. It's "Hope I get a pretty toy."

REUBEN—Well, a jumpin' jack 's a pretty toy, aint it? It's what I want, anyhow.

RHODY—Ma'll lick you, ef you say it so.

TEACHER—That will do, Rhoda. Let him fight it out with his mother himself. If he gets a whipping, it's no more then he deserves.

RHODY—But Ma said for you to make him say it right.

MISS P.—If he's to say it when he pleases, he may say it as he pleases, for all I care.

AUNT HEPSY—She'll skin him alive, ef he does say it wrong. Hanner Ann writ that ere little varse herself, 'n she's prouder of it

than a kitten with its fust mouse. Better say "pretty toy," Ruby, ef your ma says so.

REUBEN—A jumpin' jack *is* a pretty toy.

MISS P.—We will now sing our welcome song. (*Several begin to sing, in different keys. Miss P. raps on her desk and they stop.*)

MISS P.—No, no, children. Wait till I give you the key. I will start the songs, and you must wait for me. Why, what would people think if you started in like that, all out of tune?

AUNT HEPSY—Think it was a lot o' sheep a blartin', most likely.

(*Children laugh. Miss P. raps for order, gets the key, with an old-fashioned tuning fork, if one can be obtained, and starts the song. All stand up to sing. Tune*: "*Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching.*")

SONG.

We are gathered[1] here to-night, on this Christmas Eve so bright,
Just to show you all[2] the things that we can do.
We are glad[3] to see you here, friends and parents kind and dear,
And we give[4] a hearty welcome now to you.

Chorus:

Welcome,[5] welcome, friends and parents!
Welcome, welcome now to you.
We[6] will speak and we will sing, and some music we will bring,
And we'll do it every bit,[7] kind friends, for you.[8]

Just [9] behold that Christmas tree, loaded[10] down for you and me,
Presents[11] hanging from its boughs for great and small.
There are dolls[12] and toys and drums, apples, cakes, and sugar-plums,
Something nice[13] is there, I'm sure, for one and all.[14]

Santa Claus[15] is drawing near. He will be here, never fear[16].
With a pack[17] well loaded, he'll come down[18] the flue.
Soon we'll hear[19] his sleighbells' chime, while the reindeer's[20] hoofs beat time,
And whatever[21] you want most he'll bring to you[22].

CHRISTMAS AT PUNKIN HOLLER

(*In singing, let some do the motions well, some awkwardly, while some exaggerate them.*)

(*Motions*—1, *Clasp hand on breast.* 2, *hands together, throw them widely apart.* 3, *boys bow elaborately, girls courtesy.* 4, *hold out hands, in greeting.* 5, *clap hands, through two lines.* 6, *touch breast, with both hands.* 7, *gesture with right forefinger.* 8, *throw right hand out, forefinger pointing.* 9, *point to where tree is to be.* 10, *bend forward.* 11, *both hands high, drooping from wrists.* 12, *point to imaginary articles, making little jabs in air, here and there, as each is mentioned.* 13, *clasp hands.* 14, *throw hands widely apart.* 15, *clap softly.* 16, *shake forefinger to music.* 17, *hold arms to designate large pack.* 18, *hands high, bring down together.* 19, *hand to ear, listening.* 20, *beat time, with right foot.* 21, *clasp hands.* 22, *gesture with right hand.*

Hiram sings from where Aunt Hepsy is dressing him, and Patty and Faith step inside door and sing, then pop back into entry. Patty may be partly dressed, and Fay partly undressed.)

AUNT HEPSY—(*clapping*) Brayvo, children, brayvo! Where ever did you find sech a proprate song as that, Miss Peppergrass? (*Miss P. simpers*) You never writ it your own self, did you? Wal, I guess that'll take the wind outen Hanner Ann Jenkinses sails. I allers thought a heap o' po'try, myself, but I s'posed it took a lot o' brains to write it. Did it take you days 'n days? And what was all the flumadoodles with their hands for?

MISS P.—Why, motion songs are very popular in the cities, I've heard, so I thought we would give some at our entertainment.

AUNT HEPSY—Yes, indeedy! Punkin Holler allers did pride itself on keepin' right up to date. We're no hayseeders in this commoonerty.

MISS P.—Don't you think the motions were very graceful?

AUNT HEPSY—I haint a doubt they was, Miss Peppergrass, not a mite o' doubt; but I was so flabbergasted at hearin' them ere new words sung to thet old tune and so dumfounded at seein' all them young 'uns a wavin' their paws, wild like, in the air, thet I

never once noticed if it war graceful. It sure was, though, an' that's a fact.

MISS P.—Next will be a recitation by Lucinda Lowe. An old poem, with new variations. (*Lucinda advances, bows very low, and recites. She announces the name of her piece, as do all, in the old-fashioned way.*)

MARY'S LAMB AT CHRISTMAS.

Mary had a little lamb
With kinky, soot-black wool.
He tagged her everywhere she went,
Just like a little fool.

AUNT HEPSY—Fool be'nt a pretty word, Lucindy. Why don't you say numb-head?

LUCINDY—'Twon't rhyme.

AUNT HEPSY—But it's a deal high-toneder.

LUCINDY—All right. I don't care. (*Announces title again, and begins.*)

Mary had a little lamb,
With kinky, soot-black wool.
He tagged her everywhere she went,
Just like a little—numb-head.

He tagged along to school one day,
Agin the teacher's rule.
He kicked up his heels, and blarted right out,
To see a Christmas tree in school.

The teacher tried to turn him out,
But, nimble as a cat,
He sent his little hind heels out,
And knocked the teacher flat.

"What makes the critter act that way?"
The eager children cry.
"Because it is a holiday,"
Was Mary's quick reply.

The lamb he danced around the tree,
And blarted out his song,
As if upon the program-mee
He really did belong.

He bunted down some candy bags
And frisked around some more,
Till Mary caught him by the ears,
And pulled him through the door.

Now take a warning from this tale,
And tie your critters tight,
So no ungainly beast shall spoil
Our Christmas tree to-night.

(*Bows, and takes seat.*)

HIRAM—Look out, Sammy. She's put that lamb of hers out doors, and he'll eat up the Christmas tree.

SAMMY—Can't we bring it in now, teacher?

MISS P.—You can *not.* (*as Sammy tries to speak*) No, no one will steal it.

SAMMY—Some one may eat it.

MISS P.—I hardly think any one will be hungry enough for that. People do not eat trees.

SAMMY—Deers do, 'n bears, 'n—'n—moose! Jes' s'pos'n a big moose comed along, 'n et off all the branches!

MISS P.—We'll risk it, I think. Next on the programme is a duet by Jacob Toothaker and Rhoda Jenkins.

(*They come out, bow to the chair, then to the school, then, elaborately to each other, and sing to the tune, "Reuben, Reuben, I've Been Thinking."*)

RHODA—

Jacob, Jacob, I've ben thinkin'
What a grand good thing 'twould be
If each day could jest be Christmas,
With a great big Christmas tree.

(*Pauses. Looks inquiringly at Jake, who looks sulkily at her.*)

AUNT HEPSY—Wal, why in tunket don't ye go on?

RHODA—'Taint my turn. It's his'n.

AUNT HEPSY—Chirp it up, Jake.

JAKE—Sha'n't.

MISS P.—Come, Jacob sing your verse.

JAKE—I won't sing it, 'n I won't sing it ternight, nuther, ef she calls me Jay Cup! 'Taint my name, 'n I don't keer ef 't does sound stylisher, so there! My name's allers been Jake tel this term er school. By next it'll be Jake Platter, I expect.

RHODA—But Jake hasn't got syllerbles ernough.

AUNT HEPSY—Sing it (*sings*) "Jakie, Jakie, I've ben thinkin'." That'll go all right.

JAKE—'Twon't nuther. Jakie's a kid's name. It's Jake er nuthin'. Ef she sings it so, I'll sing back, 'n ef she don't, I won't.

MISS P.—I never saw such stubborn children in my life. Did ever you, Miss Bascom?

AUNT HEPSEY—Land, yes, child. His pa's jest like him. Him 'n me was promised, once, 'n he wouldn't git spliced less'n I'd wear a blue delaine he'd bought fer me. Course, *I* warnt so mulish az he war, but I'd sot my heart on a white dimity, 'n bein's I war the one to wear it, twar his place to give in. But he wouldn't—no siree! 'N we bickered 'n bickered bout it, 'n I went right on a makin' up the white dimity, 'n finally he says, says he, "Hepsey, it's me an' the blue delaine, or the white dimity for an ole maid." "Land sakes!" says I, "You don't say so? Wal, you kin jes' take yer old blue delaine, 'n hunt ye up a gal meek enough ter be married—'n buried, in it," says I, 'n off he went, mad as a hatter. Much 's ever he speaks to me yit, but I was married—in the white dimity—two year afore he found a gal that 'd have him, 'n could wear that blue delaine. You see, I'd cut 'n made it, 'n I was slender in those days—the slenderest gal in town. Yes, Ezry Toothaker's some sot, 'n Jake comes nat'rally by it. Sing it to suit him, Rhody, do! 'Tain't 's ef 'twas fer allers. It's jest ternight.

RHODA—But there's two notes, Aunt Hepsy.

AUNT HEPSY—Draw out the Jake good 'n long, 'n it'll go. This way. (*sings*) "Jake, Jake, I've been thinkin'."

RHODA—(*sings*) (*She makes the "Jake" decidedly jerky.*)

Jake,[1] Jake, I've ben thinkin'
What a grand[2] good thing 'twould be
If each day could jest be Christmas,
With a great[3] big Christmas tree.

JAKE—(*sings*)

Rhody,[4] Rhody, I've ben thinkin'
What a grand[5] good thing 'twould be,
If we never had no Christmas,
'Cos it costs too much, you see.

BOTH—

Too[6]-ra-loo-ra-loo[1]-ra laddie,
Too[7]-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra lay.
If it { always[8] / never[9] } could be Christmas,
Wouldn't[10] that be grand and gay?

RHODA—

Jake,[1] Jake, I've ben thinkin'
That upon yon[3] Christmas tree,
Hangs a present from your sweetheart[11].
Something nice[12] it's sure to be.

JACOB—

Rhody[4], Rhody, I've been thinkin'
That there hangs on that [13] ere tree,
A leetle[14] box for my young sweetheart.
Cost a quarter[15]. Yes-sir-ree!
(*Both sing chorus, as before.*)

RHODA—

Jake[16], Jake, I've ben thinkin'
If a ring[17] the thing should be,
It[18] would be the finest Christmuss,
That has ever come to me.

JAKE—

Rhody[19], Rhody, you have guessed it.
'Tis a fine brass ring, you'll see,
With a big red stun set in it,
Jest to bind you unto me.
(*Chorus as before.*)

RHODA—

Jake[20], Jake, when we're wedded,
Will you keep each Christmas Day?

JAKE—

No, by hemlock![24] In my wallet,[22]
All my money then will stay.
(*Chorus.*)

RHODA—

Then[23] you'd better keep your ring, sir,
I'll not have a stingy man!

JAKE—

'Tis a frugal wife I'm wanting.

RHODA—

Jest you find[24] one if you can.

BOTH—

Too[25]-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra-laddie,
Too[26]-ra-loo-ra-loo-ra-lay
I'll[27] not have { a stingy husband / a spendthrift wife, Miss,
So I'll bid you { Sir, / Miss, } good-day[28].

(*Motions*—1, *shake finger, coquettishly.* 2, *clasp hands.* 3, *wave hand toward place where tree is to stand.* 4, *beat time with right fist on left palm.* 5, *clap hands.* 6, *join right hands, trip around, stop, facing, on opposite side.* 7, *join left hands, and repeat* 6. 8, *nod.* 9, *shake head.* 10, *join both hands, and dance around.* 11, *put head to one side, and smirk.* 12, *both hands clasped on breast.* 13, *point with right forefinger.* 14, *measure with thumb and forefinger.* 15, *clap hand over hip pocket.* 16, *hang head bashfully, step nearer.* 17, *hold up left hand, and look at ring finger.* 18, *place hands on Jake's shoulders.* 19, *shake her gently.* 20, *place hands against Jake's breast, look up earnestly.* 21, *starts back.* 22, *slaps pocket.* 23, *steps back,, head high.* 24, *nods emphatically.* 25, *turn backs toward each other, heads high.* 26, *look over shoulder.* 27, *face about.* 28, *bow elaborately. Rhoda dances to seat. Jake stalks glumly to his, hands in pockets.*

AUNT HEPSY—(*clapping*)Good, good enough! Ef you writ that ere song, Miss Peppergrass, you're a genyus. It's the truest and funniest thing I ever heerd. And the funniest part of it is, the men folks'll never know how funny it reely is! It's human natur, sure enough. 'Twas wuth comin' in, jest to hear that one song. What's next on the programmy?

MISS P.—"Santa Claus." An original composition by Betsey Jones.

(*Betsey comes out, unfolds her composition very deliberately, and reads her title with emphasis.*)

BETSEY—"Sandy Claws!"

AUNT HEPSEY—Hain't you pernouncin' his name kinder odd-like, Betsey?

MISS P.—That's what I think, but—

BETSEY—'Tis Sandy Claws. Uncle Sol says so, and he's the oldest man in this town. He says folkses allers used to say it so, and it's jest a new-fangled notion to change it. 'N he said if I'd read it jest as I writ it, he'd give me ten cents, 'n I'm a goin' to do it. I never had ten cents to once't before, 'n I'm a goin' to get it.

AUNT HEPSEY—Don't blame ye a bit. Ef anybody kin git ten cents outen old Sol Perkins, it's their bounden duty to do it, say I. Go on, Betsey, 'n read it up good 'n loud.

BETSEY—"Sandy Claws."—Sandy Claws is an old, old man, older than Methuselah ever dreamed of be*ing*. He lives in a big snow house, built around the North Pole, and uses the Pole for a flag staff. He is very fat and jolly, with a big ponderosity in front. His belt is so long it has to be made to order. His eyes are the kind that twinkle and laugh all by themselves. His nose is round and red, like a little apple. His cheeks are, too, what you can see of 'em. They are mostly covered by his whiskers. His whiskers are very predominant. They grow as thick as a crop of well fertilized clover in a good hay year. His hair is long, thick, and curly, so that if he bumps his head gett*ing* down a chimbley, it won't hurt him none—I mean not any. These hair and whiskers are of a sandy color, which is one reason he is called *Sandy* Claws. The other reason is because he has claws.

AUNT HEPSEY—Hold on there, Betsey! I've seen many a picture of Sandy Claws in my day, but nary a one that had claws.

MISS P.—Nor, I, Miss Bascom, but if Uncle Sol says so—

AUNT HEPSEY—Land yes, there's no disputin' Sol Perkins. He's sailed around the world, 'n lived with the Feejees 'n the Hottentots, 'n if you doubt ary one o' his sailor yarns, he'll up 'n say, "Wal, was *you* ever there?" 'n course you never wasn't 'n there 'tis. But claws on Sandy Claws is most too much ter swaller.

BETSEY—Uncle Sol's seen old Sandy Claws with his own eyes, 'n he *knows*. Sandy saved him when he was wrecked in Baffin Bay, 'n he lived with him most six months, till it come Christmuss again.

AUNT HEPSEY—Wal, wal! I knew Sol had ben wrecked some two or three hundred times, but I never heered of *that* time afore.

BETSEY—Nor I, till I hed this ere comporish*ing* to write, 'n then he told me. He'd allers kep it a secret afore. (*reads*) His claws are not on his fingers, but on his toes, 'n when he finds a bad child

a-sleepin' (I mean sleep*ing* with his stock*ing* hang*ing* up by the chimbley), he jest scratches him good 'n hard with them claws o' his'n, and whops up chimbley again, 'n leaves it hang there empty, less'n he puts in a stick. He brings beautiful things to good girls and boys, and I hope he'll bring me a diamond necklace this year, or at least a gold chain with a diamond locket. I've wished for them every year since I was a child, and although he has not brought them, I haven't given up hop*ing* yet.—Betsey Euphemia Perkins. aged 12.

There, Teacher, didn't I say them "ings" good? I never dropped none.

MISS P.—Very good indeed, Betsey, and your composition is certainly original, with your Uncle Sol, at least. (*Betsey takes seat.*)

AUNT HEPSEY—That'll please Sol—that ere compliment. He doos hate ter have any body doubt his stories—and after all, *we've* never went to sea.

MISS P.—Next is a recitation by Aaron and Mosetta Peaslee.

AUNT HEPSEY—What's the name ont?

AARON—(*as he and his sister come out*) Name's "Aaron and Moses."

MISS P.—But I told you that would'nt do for a piece, and you were to learn another.

MIRIAM—(*rising*) 'Tis another, Teacher—or rather it's the same one made longer. Ma she said it was too bad to change it when 'twas so 'proprate, 'n Reuben's mother she fixed it up fer 'em. It's good, now, Teacher, really, 'n Ma she says it's that or nothin'. 'N if they can't speak it, we can't any of us come tonight.

MISS P.—Well, let's hear it, children.

(*Children bow to chair, then to school, then to each other.*)

AARON—Says Aaron to Moses, "Let's cut[1] off our noses,"

MOSETTA—Says Moses to Aaron, "It's the fashion to wear[2] 'em."

AARON—Says Aaron, "With my shearses[3], we'll trim off our earses[4]."

MOSETTA—Says Moses, "I fearses 'twould bring the tearses."[5]

AARON—Says Aaron, (that's me, then) "Let's stay as we be,[6] then."

MOSETTA—Says Moses, "We'll do so,[7] like Robinson Crusoe."
BOTH—And Aaron[8] and Moses will stay as they be,
And come[9] hand in hand, to this fine[10] Christmas tree."[11]

(*Motions*—1, *hit nose with forefinger, with downward stroke.* 2, *smooth nose, and down on cheeks with both forefingers, holding head up, rather haughtily.* 3, *cross forefingers, work them back and forth, like shears.* 4, *take tips of ears between thumbs and forefingers.* 5, *wipe first one eye, then the other, with corner of handkerchief.* 6, *clap hands together.* 7, *nod.* 8, *join hands.* 9, *walk to corner where tree is to stand.* 10, *spread hands apart, motioning toward corner, and looking up.* 11, *stand a moment in position* 10, *then turn and bow, hands still apart.* 11, *join hands, march to front, bow, and take seats.*)

MISS P.—Well, of all the poems I ever heard!

MIRIAM—Yes, warn't it a nice one, teacher? Hanner Ann Jenkins is goin' to hang 'em each a present for speakin' it, 'n ma's going' to hang one for Hanner Ann for writin' it. She wouldn't take a cent, 'n it took her three hours. It's wuth ten cents an hour, ma says, 'n that there present's goin' to be wuth every bit of thutty cents.

MISS P.—But—

AUNT HEPSEY—Least said soonest mended, child. Best keep still, and go on with the programmy.

MISS P.—Music by the orchestra. "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night." (*Peter, Jacob, Rhoda, Miriam, Betsey, and Sammy come out.*) (*Sammy has a drum, Peter "bones" or "clappers," Jacob a jewsharp, or harmonica if he can play the tune on it, Rhoda has a triangle, and Miriam and Betsey have paper covered combs.*)

HIRAM—(*from doorway*) Shell I come, teacher? I'm all rigged out in these doodads.

MISS P.—Yes, come and take your part. Santa Claus has a right to whistle at a Christmas entertainment.

(*Hiram takes place in line, and whistles the tune. Any other tune will do as well, providing it is old-fashioned. They should have some difficulty in getting started. Miss P. "beats time" with a ruler.*)

AUNT HEPSEY—(*at close*) Wal, wal! So that's an orchestry! I've often read in the papers, "Music by sech and sech an orchestry," but I never knowed what an orchestry was. They did real well I'm sure. They'd ought to hev a wong kore piece. The folks'll be sure to clap 'em back.

MISS P.—They have, Aunt Hepsey. Play "Glory Hallelulah," children.

(*They do so.*)

HIRAM—Now shall we play "Ole Hundred"?

MISS P.—No, that is to conclude the programme. That will do.

(*They take seats.*)

MISS P.—Next is a song by Faith Toothacre, "A Christmas Fairy."

(*Faith runs from entry, dressed as a fairy, in short white skirts, with many ruffles, paper wings, flowing hair, with a paper crown, and a long slender stick in her hand. Bows lightly and waves wand.*)

FAITH—Ma, she ain't got the star fastened to the end of my wand yet, and she said this 'd have to do till to-night. It's the peskiest thing she ever tried to make stay, she says, but it's got to stay, somehow.

MISS P.—Very well. Now sing. (*Faith starts it, first too low, then too high, then Miss P. starts it, and she sings.*)

FAITH—(*sings*) Tune: "Lightly Row."

Lightly,[1] oh, lightly, oh, comes the Christmas Fairy, oh.
Brightly,[1] oh, sprightly, oh, tripping[2] o'er the snow.
Coming[3] from a land of light, just to make your Christmas bright.
Lightly,[1] oh, lightly, oh, tripping[2] o'er the snow.
Lightly,[1] oh, lightly, oh, weaveth she a spell, just so.
To[4] and fro, to and fro, tripping o'er the snow.
Singeth she a carol sweet, as[5] she comes with dancing feet,

CHRISTMAS AT PUNKIN HOLLER

To[4] and fro, to and fro, tripping o'er the snow.
Clear[6] the way, clear the way, for the happy Christmas Fay.
Joy[7] she brings on[8] her wings, as she softly sings.
Spreading[9] cheer and joy and mirth, over all the snow clad earth.
Light[10] and gay, light and gay, comes the Christmas Fay.

(*Motions*—1, *sway wand lightly, to and fro.* 2, *trip lightly to one side.* (*at next* 2, *trip back.*) 3, *wand high, to right, bring down, obliquely.* 4, *trip back and forth, a few steps.* 5, *stand still in place, but dance lightly up and down.* 6, *wand to left, against body, bring to right, and out, with sweeping motion.* 7, *hands out, in front.* 8, *look around, over left shoulder, at wing.* 9, *wave wand low.* 10, *hold wand high, dance around in place. At close, bow airily, and dance to seat.*

AUNT HEPSEY—Wal, ef that aint the purtiest thing I ever saw! And Fay makes a sweet fairy. Now you writ that, I'm sure, Miss Peppergrass. Oh, you needn't acknowlidge it, 'nless you wanter, kaze I kin tell, by the way you blush, 'n simper. You needn't be 'fraid ter own it, fer it's as good as anythin' Longfeller ever writ, I'm sure.

MISS P.—Next a recitation by Johnny Lowe—"Hang Up Your Stocking."

JOHNNY—(*he speaks very low and fast.*)

Hang up your stockin' on Christmas Eve;
That is, if you've been good,
And don't disobey, nor try to deceive,
But do as a little boy should.
For if you're good, there'll be sugarplums,
And toys in it, too, I know.
But if you're bad, there'll be just a stick
To wallop you with. Oh, ho!

AUNT HEPSEY—Massy me, Johnny! I couldn't hear a word of it. What was it about?

MISS *P.*—Say it louder, Johnny.

JOHNNY—Yes'm. (*says first line very loud and fast.*)

MISS P.—No, no, Johnny. Say it slower. (*Johnny says two lines, very slowly.*)

MISS P.—A little faster, Johnny, and loud, too. (*Johnny tries again, and does well, but speaks very loud.*)

AUNT HEPSEY—Wal, even deef old Joe kin hear that, I reckin.

MISS P.—Recitation by Sally Whittaker. (*Sally comes out, and puts finger in mouth a minute, then bows, puts in finger again, takes it out, bows again. Does so two or three times.*)

MISS P.—Speak your piece, Sally, like a nice girl.

SALLY—I'th forgot it.

MISS P.—The oak—

SALLY—Oh yes, the oak.

The oak an' the apple, the pine and the peath,
Are very fine treeth, you thee.
But the betht tree I know, with the bethtetht fruit
Ith that tree—the Chrithmuth tree. (*Points to tree.*)

AUNT HEPSY—Good for you, Sally.

MISS P.—Next, a recitation by Patience Toothacre, "Watching for Santa."

(*Patty comes from entry, dressed in long nightie. She has bare feet and flowing hair, and carries a candle.*)

AUNT HEPSY—For the land sakes, Patty Toothacre! Go dress yourself.

PATTY (*indignantly*) I *is* dressed, underneath. This is my—my—

REUBEN—Cuss tune.

MISS P.—Reuben!

REUBEN—That's what you called it.

PATTY—

I'se watching for Santa. I hope he'll come soon.
'Cause every one's 'sleep in this house except me.
He hasn't come yet, for my stocking's not filled,
I lit me a candle and crept down to see.

I'll sit[1] down and watch for him, here on the floor.
And tell him I need a new dolly to-night.
My eyes[2] are so sleepy I just have to shut 'em,[3]
But[4] I'll keep awake to catch Santa, all right.[5]

(*Motions*—1, *sits down.* 2, *rubs eyes.* 3, *closes eyes.* 4, *lies down on floor.* 5, *sit up, open eyes, stretch sleepily, lie down and go to sleep. Hi tiptoes in, and carries her out.*)

MISS P.—Now the orchestra will play the closing piece. (*to Sammy, who is wildly waving hand*) What is it, Sammy?

SAMMY—Please kin I g'wout?

MISS P.—Yes. (*Sammy tiptoes out. Orchestra begins "Old Hundred," and Sammy bursts wildly in.*)

SAMMY—Teacher, oh teacher! Somebody's been and gone and done it! I told you they would! I told you so! Oh dear! Oh dear!

MISS P.—Why, Sammy, what is the matter? What has happened?

SAMMY—Somebody's gone and stole that ere tree!

(*School breaks up in wild confusion, every one running out to see.*)

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